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Thaere Is Not Your Friend

Scenario Supplement for Night's Homecoming

By Morrie Mullins

Former Living Force Plot Director and Campaign Designer

Tensions have risen regarding Thaere's military presence in Cularin. One night last week, a message appeared everywhere: "Thaere Is Not Your Friend." Since then, the letters TINYF have popped up on buttons, shirts, and stickers. Now, "Eye on Cularin" investigates the growing accusations. This supplement to the Living Force campaign ties into the November scenario, Night's Homecoming, the conclusion of the "Night Eyes" trilogy.

Tensions have risen in recent months regarding the continued presence of Thaere's military in Cularin. One night last week, a message appeared - - painted on walls, scrawled on tables, chiseled into sidewalks - - in several hundred places throughout the Cularin system. From restaurants in Gadrin and Hedrett to bars on Tolea Biqua to shelters on Almas, the same five words appeared: "Thaere Is Not Your Friend." No single group has claimed responsibility, and while Thaereian forces supervised the removal of all the offending graffiti within a matter of hours, the message was clear. Someone - - a large number of someones - - views Thaere as an increasing problem.

While the full-fledged graffiti has not reappeared, the letters TINYF have popped up with surprising (or, for Thaereians, alarming) frequency. A few brave individuals have even ventured out into public wearing TINYF buttons and shirts, and TINYF stickers have found their way onto numerous doors, windows, and other places such a message might be noticed.

The displeasure of the Thaereian forces is plain to see, but they do not seem, at this point, to have done much about it. People are interested, though, and it has fallen to Cularin's newsnets to begin probing the issue in more depth.

Hello. This is Ryk Osentay, reporting for "Eye on Cularin." It's impossible to live in Cularin this week and not have seen the tiny-F, as it's come to be called - - the five letters T-I-N-Y-F that have shown up almost everywhere. Their ubiquity is disturbing many, since it is unclear where the various stickers, buttons, shirts, holograms, cookies, bootlaces, and monogrammed holsters have come from. Such items do not appear out of thin air, after all; they must be manufactured. But where? And by whom? These are questions that many citizens of Cularin are asking themselves.

If I had to guess, though, I'd say that the citizens are much less concerned about where the letters come from than about our protectors from

Thaere. The letters, after all, are shorthand for a message that came through very clearly to Cularin last week: "Thaere is not your friend." But why? What does the message mean? Is there something that we ought to be doing differently? Could something allow us to see the truth behind Thaere's actions - - if there is some truth other than what they claim, of course, which this reporter would never, ever suggest? What is it that we're supposed to be gleaning from the message?

To answer this question, "Eye on Cularin" conducted a series of interviews with citizens of our system. While our survey may not be quite so broad as that conducted by our missing colleague, Melanda Forswoth, we hope to sample a meaningful cross-section of Cularin's citizenry.

A picture of missing "Eye on Cularin" reporter Melanda Forswoth appears on the screen, with information regarding her disappearance and a number to contact if the viewer has any information. It disappears and Ryk is seated at a table in a darkened room. A shadowy figure sits across from him. Ryk: Welcome back. I'm here with an individual who has requested anonymity. He - - or she, since we can make him or her sound like whatever we want - - claims to have information about Thaere that might help to explain what we've seen this past week. Guest?

Guest: Yes. I know much. You know little. Nerf-herding follower of bantha tracks. Shaggy beast of wampalike intellect.

Ryk: Um...

Guest: You do not know. I know.

Ryk: Well, no. That's why you're here. So we can talk about what you know.

Guest: Fool! I am evil overlord! You bow down to me!

He stands, shoving back his chair, and pulls a half-meter wooden rod from one leg of his pants.

Guest: Fear my lightsaber!

Ryk: Um... That's a stick.

Guest: Die, coward scum of not-Sith!

He tries to toss the table aside and finds it too heavy. He shoves at it. It moves a few centimeters. He curses - - everything but "poodoo" gets censored - - and trudges around the table, stick in hand.

Ryk: Guards? Hello, guards?

A stun blast comes from off-camera. The shadowy man with the stick falls unconscious. We fade out. When the picture returns, Ryk doesn't seem to have moved, but someone different sits across from him.

Ryk: We're back. Security has detained the previous guest, who apparently didn't have all that much to tell us anyway. Our next interviewee will

hopefully shed a little more light on the situation. And - -

He looks off-camera. Ryk: And I've been told that this one isn't carrying any large sticks with which to attack me. Welcome, guest. Summary of the "Night Eyes" Trilogy The "protection" offered by the Thaereiens often includes harsh justice - - harsh enough that many citizens of Cularin have become increasingly resentful of the Thaereian presence. Senator Wren, however, maintains that Thaere has her support. Could she possibly know their cruelty?

The dark form across from him nods. This individual looks to be smaller than the last, but the shadows seem to layer over his - - or her - - face and shoulders. Nothing at all is clear.

Ryk: I understand that you work in electronic surveillance. Is that the case?

Guest 2 (voice masked to sound exactly like Ryk's): It is.

Ryk: You have some small amount of talent, then? But more importantly, I think our viewers will want to hear about your connections. I've been told that you have information from someone deep within the slicer underworld about certain fund transfers. Can you tell us how you came by this information?

Guest 2: By being smarter than you.

Ryk: Of course. More specifically?

Guest 2: Largely genetic, I assure you.

Ryk: This is going nowhere. Let's bring on the next - -

Guest 2: You want to know about the InterGalactic Banking Clan's ties to Thaere, don't you? No one else is going to give you the information I have.

Ryk leans forward, elbows on the table that separates him from the guest.

Ryk: That's very much what we want to know about. Given that the InterGalactic Banking Clan is a known financial supporter of the Separatist movement, what can you tell me about them and their link to Thaere?

Guest 2: Oh, not much. Just a little matter of a transfer of 200 million credits from IBC accounts to the Thaereian Navy over the last six months.

Ryk consults a datapad.

Ryk: 200 million? I wasn't told that.

Guest 2: No, you weren't. If I'd given your producer the real figure, I'd be in Thaereian hands by now. Two hundred million fills a lot more pockets than just those of the fighter jockeys, let me tell you.

Ryk: You're saying our producer has been paid off by Thaere?

Guest 2: Maybe. I'm saying there aren't many people who couldn't be reached for that price. A little here, a little there... idiots in this system

will take money from anyone. You know what's funny? You transfer credits from the right kind of account to another account, and that opens up the receiving account forever. Take money from the wrong people at the wrong time, and those people can get at your goods for as long as you've got 'em. It's not every account, but one of the big corporate accounts? They do enough transfers and the system set up by the IBC is configurable enough that if they use the right code, they have permanent access to everything a receiver ever does with their money. So getting paid a little by the wrong people can make you vulnerable as long as you're using the same account structure.

Ryk: That sounds ominous. Are you saying Thaere has done that?

Guest 2: No...

Ryk: Let's go back to our producers having been paid off, shall we?

Guest 2: If we're still broadcasting, then either they haven't been paid off, or they think the best way to hide the fact that they have is to do nothing. I don't care about your producers. I'm already talking, so they can't do anything to stop me right now. I gave them lower figures and only hinted at how much Thaere got from the IBC. Not enough to make them call in the hounds. Ryk: Why? Why is Thaere getting so many credits from the IBC?

Guest 2: I'm smarter than you, Ryk, but you aren't that dumb. Thaere isn't loyal to the Republic. They're working with the Separatists. For all we know, they have been all along.

Ryk: "We"?

Guest 2: They practically have control of Cularin, and we have one of the biggest Jedi training facilities in the galaxy outside of Coruscant. If the Separatists can take control of Cularin, it may shift the balance of power. So far, Cularin hasn't been called on to assist in the Clone Wars. That doesn't mean we won't.

Ryk: Does this mean Senator Wren is a traitor?

Guest 2: We don't think so. She's being manipulated, like everyone else.

Ryk: Who is the "we" you keep mentioning?

Before the guest can answer, the lights in the room come on. Every shadow disappears, and the masking of the guest's face and voice shut down. The guest is none other than Gerta Haman, the Human woman who led Cularin's resistance against the Metatheran Cartel and was feared by some to be dead. [The heroes would have encountered Gerta in the original "Eye of the Sun" trilogy, the first three Living Force events.]

Armed guards wearing Thaereian uniforms rush into the room and slam Gerta to the table. Her eyes are wide and fearful as her hands are bound behind her back. The guards jerk her to her feet.

Gerta: Thaere is not your friend, Cularin! Not your - -

Four guards reach in at once and bash Gerta's face with stun batons, much

more forcefully than stun batons need to be used. She slumps forward, unconscious, and is dragged out of the room. The scene fades. The next image is of Ryk, seated beside Yara Grugara at the "Eye on Cularin" news desk.

Ryk (having difficulty speaking): It hardly feels like that was only yesterday, Yara.

She pats his arm. He nods in appreciation and takes a deep breath.

Ryk: This morning, the Thaereian ship transporting Gerta Haman to Coruscant, where she was scheduled to meet with Senator Wren to discuss the allegations made on this program at the request of the Senator, was attacked. Haman and fourteen members of the Thaereian Navy were on board. Jedi Knight Ish-Bel Tur served as guardian of the mission and liaison from the Almas Academy. Three minutes after the initial distress call, the ship exploded at the edge of Thaereian space. There were no survivors. The Thaereian government has offered a sizable reward...